

**Written Testimony of Michael C. Fitts, Executive Director  
of the Connecticut Council on Occupational Safety and Health  
and Pamela Puchalski, Coordinator of the Injured Worker Project  
Before the Connecticut General Labor and Public Employees Committee  
in support of HB 5262 AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE  
FOR CURRENT AND FORMER UNIFORMED MEMBERS OF PAID OR VOLUNTEER FIRE  
DEPARTMENTS.**

*Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, and members of the Connecticut General Labor and Public Employees Committee, we are the Connecticut Council on Occupational Safety and Health also known as ConnectiCOSH. We are a health and safety organization dedicated to workers. We would like to express our support for HB 5262 An act concerning workers' compensation coverage for current and former uniformed members of paid or volunteer fire departments. As an organization whose primary mission is to educate workers about how to be safe in their workplace so that they are less likely to get injured or be made ill while they are at work, we are very aware that firefighters' workplaces are not so easily controlled. Each time they are called to combat a fire they face dangers that are obvious because of the basic nature of their work, but recently it has been found that they also face hazards that are not so obvious. These hazards are the toxic substances found in the furniture, electronics, flooring, insulation, and other building materials that once ignited become toxic fumes that are potentially carcinogenic and poisonous. Even with their turnout gear, firefighters are exposed to and often absorb these substances when they are in a gaseous state as it is virtually impossible to control exposures in such a volatile environment.*

*The result of these exposures has resulted in dramatic increases in cancer rates in firefighters as was found in a study of 30,000 firefighters from three large cities. This study conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) further corroborated the results of several smaller studies that found that firefighters were more likely to develop cancers of the respiratory, digestive, and urinary systems and were two times as likely to develop mesothelioma. (Original article: Mortality and cancer incidence in a pooled cohort of US firefighters from San Francisco, Chicago and Philadelphia (1950–2009) Occup Environ Med oemed-2013-101662 Published Online First: 14 October 2013)*

*Firefighters have an inherently risky occupation. Just as they are exposed to the potential for compensable injuries from pieces of a burning building falling on them they are also potentially exposed to toxic fumes and smoke that contain high quantities of carcinogenic substances. It is our belief that firefighters should receive workers' compensation if they become ill because of these exposures. We urge you to support HB 5262 An act concerning workers' compensation coverage for current and former uniformed members of paid or volunteer fire departments.*

*Michael C. Fitts, Executive Director*

*Pamela Puchalski, Injured Worker Project  
Coordinator*

*ConnectiCOSH*

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